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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses the nature of people and the prospect of change. People are identified as either creators of change, reactors to change, or those who attempt to move forward while looking backward, and the education profession exhibits a seeming increase in reactionary approaches. In the educational planning process, many issues exist that can serve as creative opportunities. First, mandatory legislation, specifically Ontario Bill 82, Act to Amend the Education Act, is being interpreted differently by parents and school board personnel concerning the provision of appropriate special education programs. This bill has proven that mere provision of law and policy is insufficient in implementing a system-wide special education plan. Second, examples of private enterprise in education should be used by public educators as pivotal posts to improve their services. Third, adaptive, flexible school systems are needed, utilizing organizational models which support but do not control school function. Many school systems are considering how to decentralize control and establish school-based management practices. Fourth, special education must become assimilated as part of the normal function of a school. (JDD)

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THE FUTURE IS NOW: IMPLICATIONS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF (SPECIAL) EDUCATION LEADERS

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THE FUTURE IS NOW: IMPLICATIONS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF (SPECIAL) EDUCATION LEADERS

T.R. Posno

"DESTINY IS NOT A MATTER OF CHANCE: DESTINY IS A MATTER OF CHOICE." - Anonymous

"MAN IS LIMITED NOT SO MUCH BY HIS TOOLS AS BY HIS VISION." - Pascale & Athos (1981)

In discussing a topic such as has been assigned, I think I would much prefer to simply list the above stated quotations; rearrange the seating into groups of six; and then move freely amongst you so that I may share some collective of your analysis and synthesis of the issues which we must address. However, that is not the case, for I have not only been asked to speak to you, but I must also inflict my thoughts upon you in writing.

Possibly the best way to begin is with a favourite quotation from a delightful publication entitled, Teaching as a Subversive Activity by Postman and Weingartner (1969) which, like most sound thinking, is as relevant today as it was seventeen years ago.

> This (presentation) is based on two assumptions: one, it seems to me is indisputable: the other, highly questionable. I refer to the beliefs that (a) in general, the survival of our society is threatened by an increasing number of unprecedented and, to date, insoluble problems; and (b) that something can be done to improve the situation. If you do not know which of these is indisputable and which is questionable, you are attending the wrong session. (p. xi)

Now I am no "doom and gloomer." On the contrary, I share with you an indefatigable and not so common ability to transcend our difficulties and view problems much as the ancient Chinese are purported to consider crises...as creative opportunities. I agree entirely with John Naisbitt (1982) when he suggests that recognition of existing and anticipated problems and issues enables strategic planners to identify trends which can be utilized as power and momentum for the implementation of planned

activity. In other words, trends are but the winds by which we can set our sails to steer our chosen course.

Before talking about some of these problems and trends, I must take a few minutes to discuss the nature of people and the prospect of change. In The Third Wave, Alvin Toffler (1980) attempts to be much more optimistic and not nearly so fearsome as he was with his earlier book, Future Shock (1970). Toffler establishes a concept of change as a natural and normal process of living. We must change to exist; we must change more to prosper; and to not change is to wither and regress below subsistence. He sees people considering the prospect of change as falling into one of two major perspectives...creators and reactors. Reactors are those who not only resist change, but deny the future, denigrate the present, and look for virtue in a former era which only exists in their imagination (Kozol, 1984). Creators, on the other hand, not only seek every opportunity for change but also go out of their way to create opportunity for change. They tend to see problems not as pitfalls, but as stepping stones opportunity has provided for crossing the stream.

I have no difficulty in accepting the distinction between creators and reactors, but like many others, I find, particularly in education, a third group. A set of "mugwumps"--those whose fat posteriors are so firmly planted on a fence, watching the reactors react and the creators create, that they cannot decide which way to lean. All too frequently it seems that so much of the inertia within our system comes from those who have a responsibility to lead but are so concerned with the possibility of misfortune that their eyes are firmly locked upon a rearview mirror as they attempt tentatively (if at all) to drive ahead. Or as Michael Fullan states in The Meaning of Educational Change (1982) "...reforms will fail when those responsible spend too much time making decisions...the phenomenology of change--how people actually experience change is distinct from how it might have been intended--is at the heart of (a) spectacular lack of success. (People must recognize) that change is a process rather than an event." (p. 24)

Forgive me for taking the time to share this very limited perspective on the prospect of change, but if the rest of my remarks are to have any meaning at all, you must appreciate my desperation to share perspectives and possible solutions with those of us who have similar needs. With the final implementation of Bill 82 in Ontario, I am afraid of being engulfed in a returning tide of complacency about all matters related to special education and I am becoming concerned about a seeming increase in reactionary comments I hear from my colleagues such as "if it ain't broke, don't fix it." Is that

not the plea of a "mugwump" looking backward? If it is, then it is another indication of support for the contention from the 1983 report, A Nation at Risk "...the educational foundations of our society are being eroded by a rising tide of mediocrity." If we're not constantly seeking improvement: if we must wait for breakage, it will be too late and we will have failed in our mission to provide leadership.

Let's direct our attention to some of those issues we can anticipate as creative opportunities in our planning for the year 2000. Not that I wish to spend a great deal of time 'knashing my teeth' and 'beating my breast' about problems, nor am I going to offer much in the way of possible solutions, but I do wish to point out some of the sign posts which must be considered in subsequent discussion in more amicable environments immediately following this session. These issues will be countenanced in four major headings: Mandatory Legislation, Privatization, Organizational Change, and Making Special Education Regular.

MANDATORY LEGISLATION

"YOU CAN'T LEGISLATE RESPONSIBILITY"

- Bergman, 1978

For those of us in the Province of Ontario, 1985 represented a vintage year, i.e. the final implementation of Bill 82. But this Act to Amend the Education Act mandating school boards in the Province of Ontario to "provide an adequate educational program...for all students...appropriate to identified needs...at public expense" represents a beginning...and not the end. In The Report of the Commission on Private Schools in Ontario (1985) many submissions received from private, public, and professional sectors indicated a general disbelief in the ability of public education to fulfill this mandate. For example, "it was argued that, despite the enactment of relevant legislation, the majority of public boards neither will be able nor can be expected to be able to provide for the needs of all children." (p. 35)

In the recommendations section of the same report, the Commission advises, "that although the individuals and groups concerned with special education seemed thoughtful and reasonable in their approaches, they also seemed wary of the integrity of the others and apprehensive about the full implementation of Bill 82. This apprehension or wariness seemed to arise from the quite

different perspective from which each group views the expectations created by Bill 82. Parents and their representatives understand the expectation of 'appropriate programs and services' as the provision of the very best available regardless of the cost. School board personnel, on the other hand, view the provision of appropriate programs and services as those that can be reasonably delivered." (p. 65) My personal observation of the expectations of many school boards is such that reasonably delivered means the least that can be provided at the least possible cost. How far does one go in reducing expenses before a program or service becomes a mere token--not even barely adequate and certainly a long way from the expectation of the best available? How many parents of pupils with ordinary needs would be content with the least and cheapest possible program? In order to deal with this problem, the Commission recommends:

> 48. That subsection 8(2) of the Education Act be amended to specify that appropriate special education programs and services are those that, within the limits of a Board's resources and other responsibilities, provide each child with the opportunity to reach his or her potential. (p. 65)

This "unfortunate retreat" drives a big hole into the intent of the original legislation. If such a legislative retreat is provided, the Commission subsequently recommended an additional "escape valve" in recommendation 49 which would permit a school board to purchase a program from an independent school that is also approved for special education. Recommendations 50 to 54 deal with specifications about cost sharing, residential settings, approval of independent schools, and access to appeal procedures and identification placement and review committee (IPRC) processes. Not that costs weren't considered, the Commission estimated $2.3 million just for the annual, extra expense of the IPRC process of independent school students.

If the Commission's recommendations are implemented, I have little difficulty visualizing the opportunities for private school operators and lawyers, but my real challenge lies in planning and creating opportunities for the public system of which I am employed.

A somewhat related but substantively different concern lies with those who believe the rights of exceptional youth to be protected with the implementation of mandatory legislation. In commenting upon the Sixth Annual Report to Congress on the Status of Education and Related Services for Handicapped Children and Youth, M.M. Gerber (1984) stated:

> ...special education professionals and elected representatives alike seem to be increasingly perceiving policy and legal doctrine as if they are the content and and method of 'special education'. (p. 209)

Authorities must recognize that mere provision of law and policy is insufficient. Implementing a system wide special education plan; providing the substance of due process; and ensuring a provision of legal protection are, in themselves, window dressing for the provision of special education. Bureaucratic process and paper does not constitute learning. You cannot legislate responsibility and leaders must realize that laws and regulations do not develop appropriate educational practices and teacher capabilities.

However well-intentioned, a prime example of this misdirection has been a head-long rush in some jurisdictional areas to implement Individual Education Plans (IEPs) in accordance with the American model regardless of the concerns and errors which have been so thoroughly documented. Possibly the most flagrant misjudgment in this respect, is the legislative requirement to devise annual instructional objectives and method by a committee comprised of 'experts' who are usually some distance from actual classroom practice and lack any hands-on experience with the pupil in question. American teacher unions immediately branded this aspect of the legislation as an abrogation of teacher responsibility. Far better be it for a 'committee of experts' to devise a description of the student in terms of educational needs and then assign the problem of program planning (instructional objectives, method, and evaluation) to the teacher or staff who will be actually providing instruction or service.

As if this misstep was not enough, many authorities have rushed to the computer for assistance in devising psychological profiles, educational diagnosis, and IEPs. While most have proffered concerns about a paper work jungle, I suspect that much of their motivation comes from a desire to minimize legal risk by standardizing and limiting comment and exposure. Certainly concern about staff load is laudatory, but the key to this conundrum should be emphasis upon assistance from the computer and not computerized replacement of human judgment and personalized attention. Possibly the most effective way to increase parental wariness and apprehension is to hand them computerized reports and educational plans. Parents value and pupils require the creative toil of a caring and committed professional.

"THE WISE ARE NOT LEARNED AND THE LEARNED ARE NOT WISE."

- Lao Tsu, ancient Chinese philosopher, as quoted by Bennett W. Goodspeed, 1983

PRIVATIZATION

An advertisement in my local newspaper, The London Free Press (1986.02.10) stated:

> Your Child Will Gain One Full Grade Level in Just Thirty-six Hours...Guaranteed.

Time Magazine headlined an article on education (1986.02.03) as:

> Teaching the Three R's for Profit.

It typified other newspaper advertisements with, "Is your child caught in a failure chain?" and "Give your kids an unfair advantage." It went on to say, "Both pitches are aimed at the same customers: parents with cash and the desire to bring a lagging school-child up to speed or to put a bright youngster ahead of his classmates. In the past few years such appeals have been pulling thousands of pupils (including a smattering of adults) into private, for-profit learning centres, which are spreading across the country. It quoted one ebullient owner as saying, "It's an American response to an academic problem...you can solve this problem and make money too."

In The Year Ahead 1986, a prophetic John Naisbitt quoted a report issued by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching as stating that, "nearly $60 billion a year will be spent on corporate-run education. In the year ahead, the reprivatization of America will become a swollen tide of private industry rushing in to fill the gaps left by Federal government budget cuts, local governments' inability to finance basic public services, and consumer demand for quality service and greater accountability." (p. 117)

Closer to home in a brief submitted to the Commission on Private Schools in Ontario (1985), Sheila Morrison, a proprietor of a private school for learning disabled students stated:

> The Ministry of Education generally, and school boards in particular, have failed, and are still failing, to provide adequate education for the learning disabled student. The greater injustice lies, not in the inability to provide programs, but in the refusal to admit appropriate programs are not available, thus effectively cutting off all possibility of the student obtaining alternative help. (p. 03)

In another brief to the same Commission, the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation, District 1, stated:

> At this time, local boards and teacher groups are concerned that provincial funding will not keep up with these extra demands on the education system, and students without special needs should not be made to bear the burden. (pp. 5-6)

How many parents, frustrated with the plodding slowness of public education to respond to affirmed need, will seek private opportunity? How many parents, disappointed with special classes and inadequately supported mainstreaming, will insist upon private schools for their learning disabled or gifted/talented children?

I am not suggesting that public education authorities should abdicate their responsibility and turn to private means to provide the answer. But examples of private enterprise and initiative can be used by public educators as pivotal posts to do it smarter, better. After all, public education has a monopoly...or does it?

> "AN OBSTACLE IS BUT AN OPPORTUNITY TO CLIMB HIGHER OR A NEW PATH TO LEARNING AND ENDEAVOUR."

ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE

Most educational jurisdictions could be characterized as having stable (and conservative) organizational structures which have remained in place for long periods of time even with turnover of senior administrators and elected trustees. With the advent of school board consolidation, most have evolved into a multi-layered hierarchy of departmental structures firmly welded into place.

In his prologue to The Adaptive Corporation, Alvin Toffler (1985) speaks of, "the museum of corporate dinosaurs." He says:

> Some firms are already beyond rescue; they are organizational dinosaurs. These are non-adaptive corporations, many of which will disappear between now and the not-too-distant turn of the century. For many of these firms 1955-70 were years of almost uninterrupted, straight-line growth in an equilibrial environment. Managers looked smart--indeed they very often were smart--if they simply did 'more of the same.' (p. 01)

We need adaptive, flexible school systems utilizing organizational models, which support (not control) school function. System executives may have to 'de-construct' and recreate organizational support as an on-going process in order to maximize maneuverability. Today's leaders must be experts, not in bureaucracy, but in the coordination of ad-hocracy. The adaptive leader must be capable of radical action--willing to think beyond the unthinkable: to reconceptualize procedures and programs before crisis results in some inescapable reaction. Successful leaders anticipate the right moves; not movement from fright.

In The Search of Excellence, Peters and Waterman (1982) suggest "loose-tight" organizational structures: i.e., an organization which supports departmental autonomy, and authority to be creative (and to make mistakes), but bound to an absolute adherence and accountability to commonly held (and frequently expressed) corporate beliefs and values. The most common quality of successful corporations over the past decade, was a complete dedication to the value of customer service.

While generally never advocating that educational organization and management should be based on business practices, it is refreshing to note such advocacy for principles of corporate management which should be the basis of educational jurisdiction throughout the country.

After a long era of establishing standardization and homogeneity, many school systems are now considering how to decentralize control and establish school-based management practices. Where will this lead special education? Will school-based budgeting result in a case-contracting for services for the identification and programming of exceptional pupils? Will high-cost, low-incidence programs be threatened because there is insufficient recognition of need at the level of school decision-making? Will mainstream programs improve because schools recognize the need for additional resources to support meaningful and effective classroom activity? How will specific professional expertise be identified and nurtured in the micro-prospective of

a school? Will practices of school-based decision-making promote a resurgence of the evils of categorical funding?

There is little doubt that we are entering a time of turbulence, but it's greatest danger is a temptation to deny reality. The new realities are perceived as threats. They do not mesh at all with 'what everybody knows'. But a time of turbulence is also one of great opportunity for those who can understand, accept, and exploit the new realities. It is above all a time of opportunity for leadership. Peter Drucker (1980) suggests that we can negotiate the sea of turbulence if we remember to manage the fundamentals by focussing on opportunities, developing strategies, and committing action.

MAKING SPECIAL EDUCATION REGULAR

> "A TEACHER'S ROLE IS TO ENABLE A CHILD TO BECOME ALL THAT S/HE MAY BE."

It is possibly ironic to understand that I am totally committed to making my job redundant. If the intent of all mandatory legislation is to be fulfilled, it must be realized that special education must become assimilated as part of the normal function of a school. This means the complete extinction of the all-too prevalent naive RCD (referral, classify and dispose) Reflex. When teachers and principals accept the responsibility of identifying and programming of students with exceptional needs as a normal part of common practice (and not as special education with all its attendant mythology of expertise and extra resources), then, "ours is the Earth and everything that's in it" (Kipling, 1920). When every teacher, upon accepting the responsibility of an exceptional child, says, "I want to" with the confidence of knowing s/he can, then special education will be regular...and <u>vice versa</u>.

I have deliberately not prepared this paper with an assumption of academic objectivity. On the contrary, this is a biased, personal statement with consistent referral to "I, me, we, us." Much to my chagrin, I discovered a few years ago, that "I" was designated as a leader and I could no longer look to "they" or blame "them" for what had to happen. I am prejudiced in my belief that we can do something. The problems and issues I have identified are real, and no doubt we could add many more to the list, but they have been offered here as examples of "creative opportunities" begging our solution. I have refrained from offering possible solutions because this meeting is, in itself, a "creative opportunity." I am anticipating with considerable relish our subsequent discussion and sharing of

possibilities. In closing, permit me to add one more favourite quote from George Bernard Shaw...

"SOME SEE THINGS AS THEY ARE, AND WONDER WHY; I SEE THINGS AS THEY MAY BE AND ASK, WHY NOT?"

When we reach the year 2000, let our hindsight be countenanced with joy and pride, for what will be...will be that which we have wrought.

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